



Occupancy Requirements for New Buildings and Alterations to Existing Buildings

These requirements apply to all commercial structures and all R-1 and R-2 structures.

I. CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY - GENERAL

A. A new Certificate of Occupancy is required prior to use or occupancy of any commercial, R-1 or R-2 structure as follows:

Prior to occupancy of a new building or tenant space; or
Prior to a change of Use Group of a building or tenant space; or
Whenever a building or tenant space has an increase or decrease in gross floor area.

B. In other instances of renovations of an existing building, structure or tenant space where such a building, structure or tenant space has a valid Certificate of Occupancy, final inspection approvals serve as the Certificate of Occupancy.

C. A Certificate of Completion shall be obtained for a building shell prior to any tenant occupancies. 'Tenant space' and 'Tenant occupancy' refer to all space and occupancy, whether occupied by a tenant or an owner.

D. The Planning Department will accept bonding for paving, landscaping and irrigation if not complete at the time a Certificate of Occupancy is required. The value of the bond is established by providing an actual contractor's proposal to complete the work to the Planning Department for approval. If approved, the applicant can file a bond or letter of credit, using the Planning Department's standard forms. (Available in Room 203 of the County Administration Building), or file a cash bond. Acceptance of the bond usually is done in one day upon review by the County Attorney's Office.

Any site construction changes needed from the Planning Department's issued set of approved site construction drawings should be faxed to the Planning Department at 796-0790 for approval prior to making the changes. If you do not have a set of site construction drawings on site and stamped 'approved' by the Planning Department, contact the Planning Department at 748-1072.

II. CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION - BUILDING SHELL

A. A Certificate of Completion for a building shell may be obtained after all final inspections are performed and approved. Such inspections shall be obtained from Building, Fire, Planning, Environmental Engineering, Utilities and Health Departments as required.

- B. Prior to issuance of the Certificate of Completion for a building shell, the following building, fire and life safety features shall be completed:

Exit Stairs;
Grade exit lobbies;
Grade exit corridors or passageways;
Elevator shaft enclosures;
Required exit lights and emergency lighting;
Elevator emergency recall system or elevators shall be locked out of service;
Required fireproofing of structural members in the entire building;
Firestopping of wiring, piping and other penetrations, both vertical and horizontal floors, ceilings and walls;
Removal of combustible trash and construction debris

- C. Storage of non-combustible construction materials in non-occupied spaces shall be kept to a minimum and shall be at least two feet below ceilings, sprinkler heads, or the lowest member of the floor-ceiling or roof-ceiling assembly.
- D. All sprinklers, standpipes, alarms, signaling systems and other required fire suppression or firefighting systems shall be activated throughout the entire structure prior to the issuance of the building shell Certificate of Completion.

III. CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY - TENANT SPACE

- A. A Certificate of Occupancy for a tenant space may be obtained after the issuance of the building shell Certificate of Completion and all final inspections are performed and approved. Such inspections shall be obtained from Building, Fire, Planning, Environmental Engineering, Utilities and Health Departments as required.
- B. Stocking of a tenant space prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy shall not take place unless all sprinklers, standpipes, alarms, signaling systems and other fire suppression or firefighting systems are operating and approved.

IV. REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTIALLY OCCUPIED BUILDINGS

- A. The existing fire protection, egress paths, and fireresistant construction protection required for occupied areas shall be maintained at all times while ongoing construction in unoccupied areas is in progress.
- B. Storage of construction materials in non-occupied spaces shall be kept to a minimum and shall be at least two feet below ceilings, sprinkler heads, or the lowest member of the floor-ceiling or roof-ceiling assembly.
- C. All sprinklers, standpipes, alarms, signaling systems and other required fire suppression or firefighting systems shall be activated throughout the entire structure. Under no conditions shall any fire suppression or firefighting system be

shut off in any occupied area, unless the valve or other activation control mechanism is continuously manned, during the period the system(s) is (are) shut off. If this provision is deemed unworkable, any work shall be done after normal business hours or is subject to approval by the Department of Fire and Life Safety. A fire watch shall be instituted during the time any fire suppression or firefighting system is out of service, with the number of persons required for fire watch such that the entire building shall be checked every hour except that residential buildings of Use Group R-1 and R-2 and educational buildings of Use Group E shall be checked every half hour. The **General Contractor (GC)** shall submit a written record of fire watch activities to the Department of Fire and Life Safety. The **GC** shall also notify the Chesterfield County Emergency Operations Center when any fire suppression or firefighting system is placed out of service.

D. Fire suppression system requirements for non-occupied spaces:

Sprinkler heads shall be located within 12 inches of the underside of the roof deck above, in either the pendant or upright position.

The use of commercial, rapid or quick response sprinkler heads, located at the future ceiling line without ceiling tiles in place, shall be subject to approval by the Department of Fire and Life Safety.

In areas used for non-combustible storage or in unfinished tenant areas, the sprinkler heads may be located at the future level of the suspended ceiling.

E. The Department of Building Inspections shall inspect and approve measures taken to safely segregate construction work from occupied areas.